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## **Casey to use menu approach to administer tobacco funds**

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LIBERTY - Casey County farmers will have an opportunity to sign up for funds in 10 agriculture programs to be administered under a new set of rules.

The county Agricultural Development Council agreed Tuesday night to use a menu approach for those wishing to receive a portion of Phase I tobacco settlement funds.

The council also agreed to allow Casey County Farm Bureau \$350,000 to administer the 10 programs. This leaves \$18,000 in the budget.

The programs include: agriculture diversification; cattle genetics for beef and dairy; farm livestock fencing; hay, straw and commodity storage; on-farm water enhancement; timber production; cattle handling facilities; dairy diversification; goat and sheep diversification; swine diversification; and technology.

The forage program will continue to be administered by Pat Williams and Casey County Soil Conservation District.

Farm owners may sign up for as many programs as they would like, but the amount of money received can not exceed \$3,000. The amount was lowered from \$5,000 to allow more farmers to participate in the programs, said Jay Hettmansperger, Casey agricultural agent.

The maximum cost-share is \$3,000 per farm serial number and reimbursement is on a 50/50 basis. The cattle genetics cost-share is limited to \$1,250 per farm, he said.

Farmers who decided not to participate after their application for funds has been approved will not be eligible for any future cost-sharing funds, according to the rules.

"This will eliminate people from signing up and not using the money," said Hettmansperger. "This ties up the money and keeps some people from getting into the program."

**Office established**

The council also agreed to pay \$12,000 of the tobacco settlement funds to the county Cooperative Extension Service and \$17,500 to the local Farm Bureau to administer the programs.

The money for the extension service will be for supplies, soil samples and other expenses incurred in helping administer the farm programs.

Farm Bureau has to set up an office for Donald Smither, who will help administer the menu programs. Smither also must be bonded.

Individuals will pick up all application sheets at the county extension service office and decide on programs, then return them to the extension service office.

Smither will go through the applications and score them on a point system.

When an applicant becomes eligible, he or she will be notified. The applicant must keep records of project costs and take two photographs of the program.

If some applicants have the same number of points, new applicants will be chosen before those who have received tobacco settlement funds in the past.

Smither said sign-up dates for the programs will be advertised two weeks prior to sign-up. Farmers will have two weeks to sign up.

In other matters, Williams announced that 108 applicants have been funded for forage programs. He said \$186,677 will be spent with each farmer getting an average of \$3,060. The amount each can receive is \$4,000, which is an increase due to the increase in fertilizer costs.

He said others applications will be reviewed in June.

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